

The Fire Fighter Gazette

Issue 13

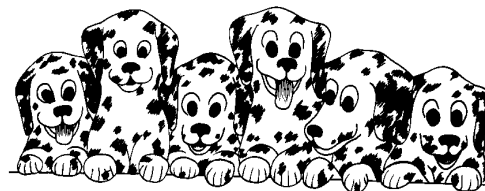
June 1998

Winter here is like living in a deep freezer for three solid months.

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS "COLD" WHERE YOU LIVE ANYMORE

Fire fighting has become more sophisticated as hi-tech equipment, devices, and tools have taken over to make the job a little easier to deal with, in all kinds of conditions. Even advanced-technology when coupled with mother nature isn't so kind to our profession during the winter months in Alaska. Fire burns but so does cold, and neither is pleasant. We are a group of 11 military and 14 government service fire fighters who take pride in being assigned to Clear Air Station, Alaska, the remote-site in the heart of the Interior. We are it, for miles. We are the only career department for 80 miles north to Fairbanks and over 200 miles south towards Anchorage on the Parks highway. However, there are some sparsely located volunteer fire departments around. Our weather conditions vary from cold to colder. Not cold like people in the lower 48 can relate to, but a new degree of cold that is on another level which your body has to make adjustments to but never seems to be able to climatize for, it is just too cold. Winter here is like living in a deep freezer for three solid months and depending on the wind-chill the temperature varies by wind speed. I'm compelled to write this article because I've never seen cold this cold, and I've never seen professionals take such pride in being at a site where your own daily survival is paramount let alone someone who needs assistance. It is imperative to have your skin covered, the cold gets into your bones and chills them solid real

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Need Your Help

As always, we would like to solicit your articles or questions, so here is how you can get in touch with us: 510 CES/CEF, 6202 Pine Drive, USAF Academy, CO 80840. Our phone numbers are: Commercial: (719) 333-2051, DSN 333-2051, and FAX: (719) 333-3740, DSN 333-3740. If possible, article submissions should include a Word For Windows file on floppy disk. Another way to get in touch with of us is through E-Mail:

ernst.piercy@usafa.af.mil

Using this method, you can attach your articles right to the message! We are also on the World Wide Web, and would love to have you visit us:

<http://www.usafa.af.mil/fire-dept>

Our page was recently updated — please come check us out again "for the first time"!!

Have a picture?

If you can send it to us on disk, in any format, we can publish it in the Gazette!

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Cold ...

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quick, upon refuge and reheat they pain as if you've damaged blood and nerve endings. It's remarkable, and I can certainly attest to it. I find myself counting my paces wherever I go outdoors, to remember the distance, keep focused on something else and see where my threshold limitations are. Of course I only do that when I'm not properly dressed, it helps keep my mind off freezing to death. Being dressed warm and comfortably is essential here, looks don't matter, warmth does. Ugly clothes rule if their warm. Fire fighters, inevitably, are at a disadvantage because we play with water and water at these temperatures is really ugly, or unique to a passer-by checking out the ice clunk formations on the discharges, or those dangly icicles hanging off of your helmet, not to mention your mustache that feels like it's going to crack and break as you rub it. You just plain sacrifice your hands and feet for this job, their always the first to go, feeling wise that is. Your cheeks are too tight to smile, but nevertheless you usually feel good inside, because your doing your job, fighting fire and the elements dissipate into a cloud of white smoke as the fire's extinguished. Anything that can go wrong, will, you know Murphy, he loves this weather. Equipment fails, snaps and just breaks, everything becomes brittle. Plastic breaks, metal freezes, glass cracks, and everything else becomes a solid. Hoses freeze solid with water in them, any water that is not moving freezes. Nozzles get cracked open just to allow water flow when not being used, and the ball valve and discharge lever still freezes closed. If you are standing in one place too long your feet will freeze where you stand, it is unbelievable. I have been frozen in place on concrete just from the bottom of my boots. We've had guys set equipment on the tailboard at -20 and couldn't get it off again. I made the mistake of putting my pen in my mouth while switching hands to grab something, no sooner did I do it when I realized what I had done and pulled it away quickly only to have a layer of tongue sticking to it, and yes it feels like you've just burned your mouth from drinking something very hot. The ultimate experiment with water is when you take a cup of hot water, and throw it in the air; it all turns into a steam cloud and drifts away. The fire trucks are equipped with a special winterization kit that is rated to -40 degrees, but there are no guarantees; wind-chill, and driving distance weren't factored into that temperature equation. The crew froze on their last 35 mile response because the truck, although winterized and well shielded, can only create so much heat. Even with the enclosed cab, the engine is doing its best to stay warm and provide heat, but before it hits the cab it's already cooled. Maintaining the booster heater water circulation system is futile. At these temperatures the water turns to slush while traveling 35 miles away. Your hose doesn't come off the truck, it stays riff raffed and bent in position. If you make the mistake of getting your hands wet, frostbite will appear

quickly and without immediate warmth you could lose your hands. We had a zealous fire fighter almost lose his hands, they got wet and he ignored the cold and warning signs, eventually they turned black, and he was out of work for months. You can't beat the climatic conditions, they're brutal unforgiving and unpredictable. Preparation is everything. A Fire Chief friend of mine, who worked on the Alaska's North Slope (where it gets colder than Clear AS), told me he had to drive backwards to a fire because the fire truck was frozen in reverse gear. Oil hardens here, if your vehicle is not plugged into a 110 volt outlet, comprising of an engine block heater, coolant heater, and heated battery blanket, you're not going to get your vehicle to start, it could be frozen solid in just a few hours. Synthetic oils seem to perform best in the land of the great Alaskan pipeline. They seem to slip into gear more easily. Additionally, interior electrical vehicle heaters help knock the edge off of the extreme coldness. Car seats freeze solid like rocks, ignitions don't turn, radio knobs don't turn, and heater switches don't move. Motor belts squeal like pigs once the engine starts. Yes, having a heated garage is highly recommended, but not always economical as fuel oil is \$1.20 gallon and electricity is at a premium. During a recent fire, SCBA bottle changes were frozen to the point of making it easier to get completely new packs from another vehicle. Anything that got wet stayed where it was, bunkers were completely frozen solid, unbendable. At -25 degrees the discharge connection caps froze and wouldn't break free, once melted, ice chunks had to be cleared from the discharge openings. The throttle broke, the hatch on the Interspiro face mask froze up or down depending on the position it was in. The smoke hangs and looms throughout the air like a low dense fog refusing to rise and the smell of burnt rubber, wood, and vehicle exhaust mix to remind us of the frozen valley of fire that awoke the darkness. It was too cold to snow, the wind blew the dry snow swirling across the roadway and a semi-truck passed at 70 mph causing a white-out condition, blinding the driver for 10 seconds from the powder draft pulled behind the 18-wheeler. In the Interior of Alaska, *no hydrants available* is a common situation, and mostly backwoods wildland fire fighting tactics prevail...three trucks performing a relay operation, that although cumbersome positioning wise, enable the crews to have ample water for protection. The orange glowing cinders left behind are a common result of wood stove fires throughout the state. Many people fail to invest in the proper stove pipe assemblies or cut corners to save money and end up paying for it. An orange tinted or cherry red wood burner is common place in many homes, due to the brutal temperatures. At - 50 outdoors there is a 120 degree

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Cold ...

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difference between the window pane and temperature outdoors; when their home is at a comfortable 70 degrees. The wood burners are going 24-hours-a-day and those stove pipes running through a wall or ceiling create some serious conductions and radiation, often igniting nearby material or the constructed materials themselves. A pin hole leak going through a wall or ceiling can ignite dead space materials and create an unrecognizable fire, that is why periodic heating equipment inspection is so important. Battery operated smoke detectors are a homeowners first defense against early notification of fire and should be utilized to the fullest. Chimneys should be inspected and cleaned annually or more often. People assume there is no resin/creosol build up because the wood they burn is plenty dry, but that's a fallacy. A fire place screen is a must. Cars are running unoccupied everywhere. People leave their vehicles running in the parking lot while they go in grocery shopping or to the theater, the wasted fuel is worth the dollars spent when you return to a warm vehicle and drive away while others are shivering in the aching coldness. Really cool people bee-bop from place to place in shorts, they're tough Alaskans, who leave their cars running and count their steps to the entrance without looking obvious. Any true Alaskan can identify a "Cheechako" (tourist or newcomer) from a good distance, well bundled, running into every building entrance and commenting "It's cold out there!" Alaskans are like, "Duh, it's Alaska." You have to live here at least 20 years in order to achieve the prestigious title as a "sour-dough." So, although I'm not going to, I certainly respect those who do and every fire fighter in Alaska, sourdough or otherwise, for whom the Bell Tolls. Technology has its benefits, but it has a long way to go before fire fighting is comfortable in Alaska. I'm just proud to serve in a state where no matter how ugly the emergency is when you drive off, heading back to the station, the scenery is awesome and it puts into perspective why people stay.

Submitted by **MSgt Bob Howard**, Fire Chief, Clear AS, Alaska

Overheard in the Fire House

Chief **Richard Duncan**, US Air Force Academy Fire Department, was recently reviewing a document that two other chief officers had already reviewed. In a footnote of the second attachment, he found a glaring error that would have negatively impacted our ability to support the mission. His statement was simple, yet profound: *"The most dangerous comments are in the small print"*. So true that is! Whether it is a legal document, or just something making the rounds — READ THE FINE PRINT!!

AF Winners!

Received this message from HQ AFCESA recently — congratulations to all the winners:



Subject: Air Force nominees for the Department of Defense Fire and Emergency Services Awards competition

"We are pleased to announce and congratulate this year's Air Force Nominees for the subject awards. This is the second year DoD will recognize its outstanding performers for their heroism, dedication to duty, outstanding achievements, and contributions to DoD Fire Services."

Each category and its corresponding Air Force nominee is listed below.

The DoD military Fire Fighter of the Year nominee is **Master Sergeant Todd W. Nielsen**, 18th Civil Engineer Group, Kadena Air Base, Okinawa.

The DoD Civilian Fire Fighter of the Year nominee is **Mr. Thomas J. Ryan**, 96th Civil Engineer Group, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

The DoD Fire Department of the Year nominee is the 36th Fire Protection Flight, 36th Civil Engineer Squadron, **Andersen Air Force Base**, Guam. They were also the winners of the 1997 Chief Master Sergeant Ralph E. Sanborn, outstanding Civil Engineer Fire Protection Flight of the year award.

The DoD Fire Fighter Heroism Award nominee is **Mr. Mark Smith**, 48th Civil Engineer Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, UK.

The winner of each DoD category will be announced during the 1998 DoD Fire and Emergency Services training conference Awards banquet, 16 September 1998, at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky. Additionally, each Air Force nominee will receive an award for being selected as our nominee for the DoD competition. Once again, Congratulations and good luck!

For further information, please contact HQ AFCESA/CEXF, **CMSgt James Podolske**, DSN 523-6321.

DoD will recognize its outstanding performers for their heroism, Dedication to duty, outstanding achievements, and contributions to DoD Fire Services.

P-19B Problem?

Received from:

Dan Robitaille, MSgt, USAFR (IMA)
Patrick AFB, FL
Driver/Operator (civilian)
Cape Canaveral Air Station

Just to let you know of a problem we found with two of the P-19's that came back from depot, I was testing our P-19B (Cape Canaveral AS) that just came back from depot and found a problem in trying to flow the 60 GPM's out of the handline, I couldn't get over 35 GPM's on the meter, after checking the nozzle I found a 30 GPM stamp on it. I notified **Chief Dukes** at Patrick AFB to check his P-19 that came back from depot last October and he found the same 30 GPM nozzle. The problem is no one would ever notice unless they checked the orifice of the nozzle or had a P-19B. Chief Dukes at Patrick would like to use the newsletter to get the word out, he has already been in touch with the people at depot and they are sending us two 60 GPM orifices. If you have any questions you can E-mail myself (DRobita961@aol.com) or contact Chief Dukes at DSN: 854-6805.

Thanks,
Dan Robitaille



Re-enlistment Rates for Fire Protection

The following information is excerpted from an e-mail transmitted by CMSgt Miller from the Pentagon:

FY98 re-enlistment rates, cumulative, as of 30 Apr 98:

AFSC	1st Term	2nd Term
AF Average	55.6%	69.8%
Fire fighters	44.8%	43.9%

The AF historical average: 55% 1st term
75% 2nd term

FY96 CE average: 44% 1st term
72% 2nd term

FY97 AF average: 56% 1st term
71% 2nd term

FY97 CE average: 40% 1st term
68% 2nd term

CMSgt Ken Miller, DSN 664-3844
commercial (703) 604-3844
ken.miller@af.pentagon.mil



Fire Fighters working hard during an exercise in the snow! Can you guess which base they were working at?

Chief Dukes at Patrick would like to use the newsletter to get the word out, he has already been in touch with the people at depot and they are sending us two 60 GPM orifices.

Terrorism Class

A National Fire Academy class was held at the USAF Academy recently, to provide train-the-trainer instruction in Terrorism. Mr. **Gary Seidel**, an Assistant Chief with the Los Angeles (City) Fire Department, provided two days of intense training on this important subject. The class, put together by CMSgt **Jim Podolske** (HQ AFCEA) was well attended:

GS-11 James Rackl, USAF Academy, CO
MSgt Thomas Woods, USAF Academy, CO
MSgt Kenneth Helgersen, USAF Academy, CO
GS-10 Cindy Litteral, Peterson AFB, CO
TSgt Gerald McMillan, Cheyenne Mountain AFB, CO
SSgt Greg Chesser, F.E. Warren AFB WY
SSgt James Ragsdale, Falcon AFB, CO
GS-8 Randal Taylor, Beale AFB CA
GS-7 Jeffery R. Kottwitz, Ellsworth AFB, SD
MSgt David Mandl, Tyndall AFB, FL
MSgt Alvin Arita, Kadena AB
SSgt John R. Meyer, Charleston AFB SC
GS-07 Dean P. Linnell, Travis AFB CA
GS-06 Joe A. Martinez, Randolph AFB TX
SSgt Coben D. Scott, Little Rock AFB AR
GS-09 Steve Carter, Hill AFB, UT
SSgt Robert Thompson, Eglin AFB, FL
TSgt James W. Jackson, Lincoln, NE
SSgt James J. Knightly, New Castle, DE
TSgt Peter Hibbard, Boise, ID
SSgt Bruce R. Sentelle, Goodfellow AFB, TX
CMSgt Marvin Gunderson, Spangdahlem, GE
GS-12 Bryce E. Mason, Rhein-Mein, GE
GS-07 Donald H Savidge, Hurlburt Field, FL
SSgt Mark Beale, Hurlburt Field, FL
GS-09 Phillip S. Prichard, Dobbins ARB,
GS-11 Don Skalsky, Ft Carson, CO

Upon completion of the class, each student was presented with a CD-ROM and two videos which will allow them to present the material to their respective installations. An excellent class presented by a superb instructor!

Pictures! →

We thought you might enjoy some pictures of a few of our troops deployed in the desert....



Two Retirements ...

Chris Burdette

*Information provided by the Davis-Monthan AFB
Fire Department.*

Chris M. Burdette retired as the Chief, Fire Protection Flight for the 355th Civil Engineer Squadron, Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona. He was responsible for fire protection of over 10,600 acres of land including 1,251 facilities, over 4,900 aircraft retired in the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center, and 117 assigned active aircraft valued at well over 5 billion dollars. In this position he supervised 75 civilian and military firefighters and oversaw an emergency vehicle fleet worth in excess of \$2.8M.

Chief Burdette was born in Moutrie, Georgia. He graduated from Albany High School, Albany, Georgia in 1962. He is married to the former Sheila Beaudet from Plattsburg, New York. The Chief and Sheila have two children, Nicole and Jill, and two grandchildren Ty and Bryce.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. September 1962 - November 1962, Basic Trainee, Lackland AFB, TX.
2. December 1962 - April 1966, direct duty assignment, Fire Protection Specialist, Plattsburg AFB, NY.
3. April 1966 - June 1968, Fire Protection Specialist, Goose Bay AB, Labrador.
4. July 1968 - October 1970, Fire Protection Specialist, D-M AFB, (Separated from Active Duty on 1 October 1970 as a Staff Sergeant).
5. October 1970 - Nov 1973, Assistant Chief of Operations and Fire Chief, Arizona ANG, Tucson International Airport.
6. 3 November 1973 - 1 May 1998, Driver/Operator through Fire Chief, D-M AFB.

Chief Burdette has moved on to another position in fire protection with the Tucson Fire Department. He has been the cornerstone of the D-M Fire Protection mission for a few decades and has left the department much better off than when he got here. We wish the Chief and his family all the best!

Ray Stokes

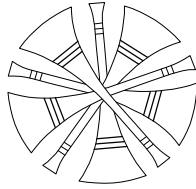
*Information provided by the Lackland AFB
Fire Department.*

Born in Charleston, South Carolina, Chief **Ray Stokes** entered the Air Force in 1963. After Basic Training at Lackland AFB Texas he proceeded to Greenville AFB Mississippi for Fire Protection Specialist training. His first assignment, following technical school, was Bergstrom AFB Texas. While serving in the military in Southeast Asia, Ray received the Air Medal. In 1968, after serving a four-year military tour, he entered the Civil Service work force at the Naval Air Station in Corpus Christi Texas as a GS-04. From there he transferred to Bergstrom AFB Texas where he remained for 14 years, climbing the ladder almost to the top. Seeking an opportunity to move further up the ladder, he traveled to Castle AFB California where he served as the Deputy Fire Chief. In 1986, he reached the top rung as Fire Chief at George AFB California. However, soon George AFB was on the Base Closure list and Travis AFB California needed a Fire Chief. After six years at Travis AFB and wanting to get home to Texas, Ray transferred to Laughlin AFB Texas as Fire Chief. Just barely made Texas by three miles! Then in 1997 the opportunity of a lifetime came his way...to finish his career at Lackland AFB Texas where it all began, 34 ½ years ago.

Ray is married to the former Beverly Caldwell of Austin Texas. They have two sons, David and Randy; two great daughters-in-law, Sharon and Tonya; a wonderful granddaughter, Samantha Rae (the one that puts the sparkle in his eyes). Ray and Beverly have settled in New Braunfels and he is now starting on a "second" career with Monaco Enterprises.

Best of
Luck to
you
Both!

Fire News



Promotion

We need to point out an error from the last issue: **Ricky Grammar** was promoted to the Chief of Fire Protection for Air *Mobility* Command (Scott AFB), as opposed to Air Material Command. Sorry about that, Ricky.

Jerry Ball was promoted to Fire Chief at Lackland AFB, Texas.

Promotions at **Kirtland AFB**:

Robert Burger to GS-9, District Chief.
Larry Guteirrez to GS-8, Station Captain.
James Lichtensteiger to GS-7, Lead Fire Fighter.

Promotions at **McChord AFB**:

Bob Vettleson to GS-10, Assistant Chief.
Ed Lawson, to GS-8, Station Captain.

Promotions at the **USAF Academy**:

Doug Baker to GS-8, Station Captain.
Jack (Bo) Howell, jr., to GS-7, Lieutenant.

Mike Haynes from Falcon AFB, Colorado accepted the Fire Chief's job at RAF Fairford (England).

Retirement Announcements

Ray Porter, formerly the Chief of Fire Protection in USAFE, currently the fire chief at Dover AFB, Delaware, announced his retirement, effective 2 October, 1998. His retirement ceremony will be held on 25 September, 1998, at the Air Force Transport Museum, Dover AFB. Drop him a line and wish him good luck:

chief.porter@dover.af.mil

ACC Headquarters announced SMSgt **Jeff Davis'** retirement — his last duty day was 31 March, 1998, with his retirement effective 1 May 1998. Good Luck, Jeff!

Kirtland AFB, New Mexico bids farewell to TSgt **Richard Ross** who retired from the Air Force on 13 March 1998 after serving 20 years. He now resides in Douglas, Arizona and serves as a fire fighter for the Douglas Fire Department.

MSgt **Robert Howard** at Clear AFS, Alaska, announced his retirement, effective in September of this year.

MSgt **Frank Dearborn** retired from Falcon AFB, Colorado on 30 April, 1998.

MSgt **Nate Greene** retired from Hanscom AFB, Massachusetts on 10 April, 1998.

Awards

McChord AFB Fire Department would like to recognize some of their fire fighters -- Mr. **Edward Lawson**, GS-08 was the 62nd Wing Civilian of the Year and A1C **Raymond Bunk** was the 62nd Wing Airman of the Year. Furthermore, Lawson and Bunk were selected by AMC as their Command's nominees as the DoD Fire Fighters of the Year. In addition, Bunk was selected as the Air Force Sergeants Association's (AFSA) Chapter 14 first-term Airman of the Year, and will represent Alaska, Oregon, and Washington region for the AFSA Airman of the Year at their annual convention in Minneapolis.

Submitted by Dan Vogel, DSN 984-2603.



Have some news you'd like to share with the world? Would you like to see pictures of your department in action in this publication? See page one for details for how to submit your information for printing in a future issue of the *Fire Fighter Gazette*.

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